

Students' Synergy with Institutional Vision, Mission, Goals and Core Values as Reflected in the Domains of Learning

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ABSTRACT:

This study aims to determine the extent of synergy among students with the institutional purpose as reflected in their understanding of educational institution's vision, mission, goals, and core values in three domains of learning, such as knowledge, skills and attitude. This is anchored in a framework which is pervasive in strategic planning models which maintains that if an organization wants to move forward, everyone in it must develop and agrees on a common purpose, embodied in the institution's vision, mission, goals and core values. The study was participated in by 444 students, chosen across schools. The findings show that students have moderate level of understanding ($M=3.17$, $SD=.70$) yet they rate "high extent" (on the value/attitude domain of learning the VMG-CV with knowledge and skills domains at "moderate extent." Further, it also reveals that generally, when grouped according to gender and year level, the students' level of understanding significantly differs. It can also be gleaned from statistical results that knowledge, skills and value/attitude domains are significantly and positively correlated with each other. Thus, there is a need to improve information dissemination and teaching of institutional VMG-CV through significant integration to all courses offered across programs. Moreover, male and female students in all year levels should be given equal opportunities to be involved in activities that would intensify their understanding of the institutional VMG-CV. The institution can also ensure regular assessment regarding the Knowledge, Skills and Attitude (KSA) of students about institution's VMG-CV, particularly if what they learn through memorization and explanation can be demonstrated in the skills they possess and the attitude and values they uphold in the form of research, most specifically action research.

Keywords: Vision, mission, goals, core values, strategic planning, domains of learning

INTRODUCTION

Equally important with having a goal and direction in an academic institution is how the people in this institution work together to achieve its purpose. This "togetherness" is aptly expressed in the concept of synergy. In an educational institution, the concept of synergy does not only apply to workers but also to students because they primarily are considered as one of the major stakeholders of any school for they are "at the center stage in the educative process" [1]. For an institution to move forward smoothly, despite the inevitable challenges along the way, all should be one in mind and spirit. This is the essence of synergy, not only among administrators, faculty and staff but most importantly among students. They constitute the "right people in the right bus" [2].

Synergy is defined as "the interaction of elements that when combined produce a total effect that is greater than the sum of the individual elements" [3]. To achieve this synergy among all stakeholders of educational institutions, there should be a common ground, in which they align themselves with—the institutional vision and mission. Whatever the context, the point is the same: If an organization wants to move forward, it needs to develop and understand an agreed on purpose, in educational institutions—the vision, mission, goals and core values. Having strong vision

and mission statements can help stakeholders in school reach such a common understanding [4].

This study aims to produce an output that could help in strategic and operational planning particularly in the area of academics and research. This output determines the extent of synergy among students with institutional purpose as reflected in their understanding of educational institution's vision, mission, goals, and core values in three domains of learning, such as knowledge, skills and attitude.

PLANNING FOR A DREAM

It is inevitable that each institution or organization wants to achieve something great but when it comes to priorities and aspects of greatness, institutions are divided. Whatever these wants are every institution should start from dreaming. Greenleaf (1977) [5], the author of a book on servant leadership puts it, "not much happens without a dream. And for something great to happen, there must be a great dream" [6]. For a dream to be fulfilled, planning should be done and this plan begins with the development of a clear sense of purpose or mission. It begins with today's realities, but its focus must always be on tomorrow's opportunities [6]. The book of Ecclesiastes has it: "The wise man has eyes in his head, while the fool walks in

darkness” [7]. This speaks of the paramount importance of planning.

However, planning cannot promise a 100% success, as Saffold puts it, “The only iron-clad guarantee related to planning is that it will take time and energy.” Planning brings about challenges to those who planned. Planning can be time consuming but its benefits are greater than these challenges associated with it. One of these is survival. Any institution or organization that takes its continued survival for granted is already on the road toward extinction. This is true with educational institutions. Considering the various challenges that Philippine educational institutions are hurdling as of the moment like the ASEAN 2015, it entails globalization of the Philippine brand of education resulting to paradigm shifts in the country’s education system characterized by the K-12 program of the Philippine Department of Education (DepED) and the Commission on Higher Education’s (CHED) typology change of higher education.

SYNERGY, INTEGRATION, ALIGNMENT AND ATTUNEMENT IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

One of the most important aspects of management in any organization is unity of command and direction [8]. This unity is needed towards organizational development and improvement despite internal and external challenges. Theorists argued that the complex process of school improvement and development will be successful only if it involves everyone throughout the organization and this will include the students [9]. Nutt and Backoff (1992) [10] as cited in Saffold (2005) asserted that people have the tendency to pursue goals that are individualistic. Therefore, there is always a need to weld even a group of like-minded people into a team with a common purpose. Pascarella and Frohman (1990) [11] put it:

An organization driven by purpose can override the tendencies to become complacent and stagnant. Purpose can provide the vitality, direction, and flexibility so often lacking in ... organizations. Purpose can help set limit for the organization so it can focus its strength and resources on its best products, markets, and opportunities... Then members of the organization can clearly understand the purpose, make a commitment to it, and live by it...The purpose will set the direction for what the organization wants to accomplish and provide guidance for implementation. [6]

Synergy can also be expressed as organizational integration, which can be a result of a “focused deployment of strengths and resources, matched with commitment and effort from personnel” [6]. It is important to observe that organizational integration is not only something technical like coordination of objectives, policies, budgets, and activities but also a very personal one. Citing Harrison [11], Saffold argued that well-integrated institutions have both “alignment and attunement.” Alignment is a deep and voluntary commitment to the organization’s goals in which members find personal fulfillment through investing their personal efforts into the organization’s activities. Attunement on the other hand is a sense of shared responsibility and mutual concern. Nanus [12] posited: “There is no more powerful engine driving an organization toward excellence and long-range success than an attractive, worthwhile, and achievable vision of the future, *widely shared* (italics mine).”

The school’s vision, mission, goals and core values make this synergy a reality as these would guide every aspect of the institution’s undertaking, from planning, organizing, directing, evaluating, and to top it all in an accreditation process.

VISION AND MISSION

A school’s vision sets out the reasons for the organization’s existence and the “ideal” state that the organization aims to achieve; the mission identifies major goals and performance objectives. Both are defined within the framework of the university’s philosophy, and are used as a context for development and evaluation of intended and emergent strategies. One cannot overemphasize the importance of a clear vision and mission, including goals, core values and philosophy; none of the subsequent steps will matter if the organization is not certain where it is headed [13]. A Vision is an aspiration description of the desired mid or long term achievements of an organization, by those involved or affected by it. A Vision asks – ‘Where are we going?’ or ‘Are we there yet?’ It is the end destination in an organization’s roadmap – what it hopes to become; the client outcome it wants achieve; the market position it wants to assume; the impact it will have; the capabilities it plans to develop; and the activities it plans to pursue [14]. It must be realistic about the market, competitive, economic, and reflects the values and aspirations of management, employees and stakeholders. In uncertain and difficult times,

visioning is vital to establish direction [15].

While vision focuses on the future, mission concentrates on the present. A mission statement defines the fundamental purpose of an organization. It identifies who the organization is, what it does, and who it serves. Where a vision statement is aspirational, a mission statement is more practical. The mission statement should communicate, in an easily understandable manner, what the organization does and possibly for whom [14, 6]. Mission and mission statement are inseparable part of corporate strategy. It has been argued that they have an impact on the performance of the organization. A study of Sufi and Lyons (2003) concluded that firms may improve their performance by better managing their mission statements [16].

Organizational values identify the principles and ethics by which the organization and its members conduct themselves and their activities. One's organization's values can be deep rooted and hard to articulate. Often, they are the product of tradition and the attitudes and actions of founders and /or influential leaders, imitated and passed on until they are second nature, so changing them is not easy [14].

Furthermore, this study cascaded from the concepts on strategic planning particularly synergy of those involved in an organization. A plan should produce vision, mission, goals and core values that would serve as a compass as well as blue print for the purpose of an academic institution's existence to be realized [17]. Realignment and integration with institution's purpose entails profound understanding. Understanding in this study refers to learning of students about the purpose in three domains of learning, namely: cognitive or knowledge; psychomotor or skills and affective or values/attitude [18].

Bloom (1956) as cited by Corpuz and Salandanan listed originally instructional objectives in the cognitive domain that are arranged from lowest to the highest level. They are as follows: knowledge or recall; comprehension; application; analysis; synthesis; and evaluation. Krathwohl (1964), as cited by Corpuz and Salandanan came up with instructional objectives related to interests, attitudes and feelings—the affective domain. They are as follows: receiving, responding, valuing, organization and characterization. Harlow (1972) as cited in [18] did something parallel to what Krathwohl did for learning objectives in the psychomotor domain. They are as follows: reflex

movements, perceptual abilities, physical abilities, skilled movements, nondiscursive communication.

Educational concept about the domains of learning contributed a lot for the conception of this study particularly in the area of determining the level of understanding of students using the three domains: knowledge (cognitive) domain, skills (psychomotor) domain, and the values/attitude (affective) domain. Learning and understanding should operate in these three domains for learning to take place.

METHODOLOGY

This study utilized the descriptive, comparative, correlational design of research. This was conducted in a selected higher education institution in Bacoor City, Cavite, Philippines to 444 students which were selected using the stratified random sampling method. A researcher-made questionnaire ($\alpha=.987$) was used. This questionnaire underwent content, face and construct validation by educational management experts. The questionnaire was divided into two parts: the demographic profile and the Likert-scale type of questionnaire that asks the level of understanding of students with the institution's vision, mission, goals and core values. Part 2 of the questionnaire was divided into three major classifications of items: Knowledge, Skills and Values/Attitude. There are three items in each classification that range from low order thinking skills, medium order thinking skills and the high order thinking skills. The questionnaires were distributed to students who were available at the moment the study was conducted.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

On the extent of students' understanding of institutional VMG-CV

Vision

Table 1. Students' Level of Understanding of Institutional Vision (n=444)

Domains of Learning	Mean	S.D.	Qualitative Interpretation
Knowledge of Vision	2.92	.84	To a moderate extent
Skills on Vision	3.16	.77	To a moderate extent
Values/ Attitude about Vision	3.47	.89	To a high extent
Overall Understanding of Vision	3.18	.71	To a moderate extent

Legend:
4.20-5.00: To the highest extent
3.40-4.19: To a high extent
2.60-3.39: To a moderate extent
1.80-2.59: To a lesser extent
1.00-1.79: Not at all (no extent)

Table 1 clearly shows that students understand to a moderate extent the institution's vision (M: 3.18, SD-

.71) and among the domains of learning, students demonstrate understanding through the domain of attitude or value (M=3.47, .89) which is interpreted “to a high extent,” skills (M=3.16, SD: .77) is interpreted as to a moderate extent and knowledge (M: 2.92, SD: .84) “to a moderate extent.”

Mission

Table 2. Students’ Level of Understanding of Institutional Mission (n=444)

Domains of Learning	Mean	S.D.	Qualitative Interpretation
Knowledge of Mission	2.93	.81	To a moderate extent
Skills on Mission	3.12	.78	To a moderate extent
Values/Attitude about Mission	3.45	.88	To a high extent
Overall Understanding of Mission	3.17	.70	To a moderate extent

Legend:
4.20-5.00: To the highest extent
3.40-4.19: To a high extent
2.60-3.39: To a moderate extent
1.80-2.59: To a lesser extent
1.00-1.79: Not at all (no extent)

In the same manner, students understand the mission as shown by Table2 to a “moderate extent” (M=3.17, SD=.70) and specifically values/attitude has the highest at M=3.45, SD=.88, which is interpreted “to a high extent”; similarly skills domain comes in at M=3.12, SD=.78, interpreted as “to a moderate extent” and knowledge at M=2.93, SD=.81, which is interpreted as “to a moderate extent.”

Goals

Table 3. Students’ Level of Understanding of Institutional Goals (n=444)

Domains of Learning	Mean	S.D.	Qualitative Interpretation
Knowledge of Goals	2.91	.82	To a moderate extent
Skills on Goals	3.11	.79	To a moderate extent
Values/Attitude about Goals	3.42	.87	To a high extent
Overall Understanding of Goals	3.15	.70	To a moderate extent

Legend:
4.20-5.00: To the highest extent
3.40-4.19: To a high extent
2.60-3.39: To a moderate extent
1.80-2.59: To a lesser extent
1.00-1.79: Not at all (no extent)

Moreover, when it comes to the institutional goals, the students similarly have an overall understanding at a “moderate extent” (M=3.15, SD=.70). Following the vision and mission, values/attitude has the highest rate, M=3.47, SD=.89 (to a high extent); skills at M=3.16, SD =.77 (to a moderate extent); and knowledge at M=2.92, SD =.84 (to a moderate extent).

Core Values

Table 4. Students’ Level of Understanding of Institutional Core Values (n=444)

Domains of Learning	Mean	S.D.	Qualitative Interpretation
Knowledge of Core Values	3.07	.83	To a moderate extent
Skills on Core Values	3.17	.73	To a moderate extent
Values/Attitude about Core Values	3.43	.83	To a high extent
Overall Understanding of Core Values	3.23	.70	To a moderate extent

Legend:
4.20-5.00: To the highest extent
3.40-4.19: To a high extent

2.60-3.39: To a moderate extent
1.80-2.59: To a lesser extent
1.00-1.79: Not at all (no extent)

Similar result can also be observed for core values as Table 4 shows that overall understanding of the core values is at M=3.23, SD=.70 (to a moderate extent); values/attitude at M=3.43, SD=.83 (to a high extent); skills, M=3.17, SD=.73 (to a moderate extent); and knowledge, M=2.93, SD= .81 (to a moderate extent). These findings imply that students understand the institution’s Vision, Mission, Goals and Core Values at a moderate extent. What is interesting to note is that the students value the VMG-CV of the institution very much and show and exemplify these as part of the institution, even though they cannot recite them perfectly.

On the difference of level of understanding when grouped according to profile variables

Age

Table 5. Difference of Level of Understanding of VMG-CV according to Age (n=444)

VMG-CV	F-Value / t-Value	p-value	Qualitative Interpretation	Decision
Vision	F=.717	.581	No significant difference	Retain Ho
Mission	F=.765	.549	No significant difference	Retain Ho
Goals	F=1.068	.372	No significant difference	Retain Ho
Core Values	F=.839	.501	No significant difference	Retain Ho

Legend:
p-value < .05 – Reject Ho; >.05- Retain Ho

Table 5 shows that there is no significant difference in the level of understanding of VMG-CV among students when grouped according to age and the null hypothesis has been retained. This may imply that age is not a factor for students to understand their institutional VMG-CV.

Gender

Table 6. Difference of Level of Understanding of VMG-CV According to Gender (n=444)

VMG-CV	F-Value/t-Value	p-value	Qualitative Interpretation	Decision
Vision	1.38	.252	No significant difference	Retain Ho
Mission	2.26	.106	No significant difference	Retain Ho
Goals	2.15	.117	No significant difference	Retain Ho
Core Values	3.67	.02	With significant difference	Reject Ho

Legend:
p-value < .05 – Reject Ho; >.05- Retain Ho

When it comes to gender, Table 6 demonstrates that in terms of vision, mission, and goals, there is no significant difference in the level of understanding when grouped according to gender, except the core values which shows a significant difference (t=3.67, p=.02). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. Statistics also show that in this study, the mean rate of

female (3.21) is higher than male (3.10), which may imply that female students understand the core values more than the male students.

Year Level

Table 7. Distribution of Mean of Level of Understanding per Year Level

Year Level	Mean	Standard Deviation
First Year	3.18	.65
Second Year	3.10	.67
Third Year	3.32	.71
Fourth Year	3.16	1.10

Legend:
4.20-5.00: To the highest extent
3.40-4.19: To a high extent
2.60-3.39: To a moderate extent
1.80-2.59: To a lesser extent
1.00-1.79: Not at all (no extent)

Table 7 shows that first year students have a mean rate of 3.18 (SD=.65), second year (M=3.10, SD=.67), third year (M=3.32, SD=.71), and fourth year (M=3.16, SD: 1.10). Among the students, third year students have the highest mean of understanding.

Table 8. Difference of Level of Understanding of VMG-CV according to Year Level (n=444)

VMG-CV	F-Value/t-Value	p-value	Qualitative Interpretation	Decision
Vision	1.89	.131	No significant difference	Retain Ho
Mission	3.64	.013	With significant difference	Reject Ho
Goals	3.29	.021	With significant difference	Reject Ho
Core Values	4.70	.003	With significant difference	Reject Ho

Legend:
p-value < .05 – Reject Ho; >.05- Retain Ho

Table 8 further exemplifies that the differences in the mean of understanding when grouped according to year level is significant in the area of mission (F=3.64, p=.013), goals (F=3.29, p=.021), and core values (F=4.70, p=.003). This means rejection of the null hypothesis and implies that year level influences the level of understanding among students, particularly between second year and third year, as shown by the Tukey's test performed to determine in which level the difference lies.

School

Table 9. Difference of Level of Understanding of VMG-CV according to School (n=444)

VMG-CV	F-Value/t-Value	p-value	Qualitative Interpretation	Decision
Vision	1.42	.24	No significant difference	Retain Ho
Mission	1.25	.29	No significant difference	Retain Ho
Goals	1.44	.23	No significant difference	Retain Ho
Core Values	1.48	.22	No significant difference	Retain Ho

When it comes to the school of the students, the results show no significant differences in the mean of the students' understanding of VMG-CV (see Table 9). Therefore, the null hypothesis has been retained. All students have the same level of understanding regardless of school they belong to, be it in the School of Arts, Sciences and Education, School of Health Science Professions, School of Hospitality and Tourism Management and School of Business and Computer Studies.

On relationship of learning domains

Table 10. Relationship Among Domains of Learning (n=444)

Relationship	r-value	p-value	Qualitative Interpretation	Decision
Knowledge and Skills	.657	.000	With significant positive relationship (at 0.01 level, two-tailed)	Reject the null hypothesis
Knowledge and Values/ Attitudes	.581	.000	With significant positive relationship (at 0.01 level, two-tailed)	Reject the null hypothesis
Skills and Values/ Attitude	.722	.000	With significant positive relationship (at 0.01 level, two-tailed)	Reject the null hypothesis

Legend:
r-value >.5 – with relationship
p-value < .05 – significant; Reject Ho; >.05- not significant; Retain Ho

Statistics show (Table 10) that Knowledge has a significant positive strong correlation with skills (r=.657, p=.000) at 0.01 level, (two-tailed). Knowledge also has a significant positive moderate correlation with values/attitude (r=.581, p=.000) at 0.01 level (two-tailed). Similarly, skills have a significant positive strong correlation with values/attitude (r=.722, p=.000) at 0.01 level (two-tailed). Therefore the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that when students' knowledge about their VMG-CV increases, their skills and values/attitude also increase, and likewise, when skills improve, values also improve.

CONCLUSIONS

The following are the conclusions of this study:

1. Students have a moderate understanding of their VMG-CV. Moreover, students internalize and show in their attitude the VMG-CV of their institution, more than the ability to memorize, recite, explain and even exemplify and put them into practice.
2. Gender and year level affect the level of understanding of students about their institutional purpose except the institutional vision.

3. Students need to know first their VMG-CV at least moderately before they would exemplify, internalize and value them in their academic life. Specifically, students cannot exemplify and demonstrate in their academic life the VMG-CV if they do not have knowledge and they could not value and advocate the VMG-CV, unless they can show and demonstrate them in their studies.

IMPLICATIONS

This study implies that:

1. The institution can improve further the teaching of VMG-CV to students not only in selected courses but also through integration of these to all courses offered in the institution. Teaching cannot only be through memorization but also offering activities that entail demonstration of VMG-CV. Moreover, students can also be asked as part of their academic rigors to be involved in advocacies that can promote not only values and attitude but also skills that are related to the institution's VMG-CV. Moreover, teachers may also model alignment to the institution's vision, mission, goals and core values as students normally capture values more than taught.
2. Students can be given more equal opportunities when it comes to activities that integrate the institution's VMG-CV. Likewise, information dissemination should be further intensified to both gender and all year levels.
3. The institution can ensure regular assessment regarding the Knowledge, Skills and Attitude (KSA) of students about the institution's VMG-CV, particularly if what they learn through memorization and explanation can be demonstrated in the skills they possess and the attitude and values they uphold in the form of research, most specifically action research.

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